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BURN-OUT AND THE FIRE THAT CONSUMES

The Face of Ministry

By Ron Durham

Now, More Than Ever, We Need *Mission*!

By Richard Hughes

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 5
NOVEMBER, 1986

Thanksgiving: 1986

It is easy to let triteness enshroud the special times of the year—times such as the Fourth of July, wedding anniversaries, Thanksgiving, Christmas. It's often hard not to write about them in cliches. Thanksgiving has long been my favorite holiday—a special family time—and I resent the way Christmas business has encroached upon it. Even though Thanksgiving Day this year will be spent far away from the family gathering, experiences of the last few months have opened deep wells of thankfulness.

This has been an unusual year for my husband Ed and me. He has been on leave from his job at the University of North Carolina, and this has provided some unusual opportunities for us. In addition to the pleasure of having the time away, there are special blessings that shine through the experiences we've had.

I am grateful for a mountain hideaway where work and thoughts and ideas flow more easily than in the midst of daily interruptions and constant demands—and for the friend who so graciously provides it. It's small and unpretentious, but the view is lovely—whether seen through the drifting fall colors, or with the fog coming in "on little cat's feet," or with the rain coming across the valley, or the snow whirling in gay abandon.

Coming across the northern part of our great country—a route we had never before taken—I was impressed with the magnitude of it, the beauty, the diversity, the fascination. Here in Los Angeles there is a different way of life, different dimensions, new things to see, new people to meet. I'm so especially thankful for friends—those we've seen on the way who have remained true and loyal through the years—those who helped us launch our marriage and nurtured us in the early years, former students who are doing well, college friends whose paths we have crossed only now and then, professional colleagues, church friends from whom we have long been separated whose lives are a blessing where they are and with whom only a brief encounter was a blessing to us. I'm grateful for congregations of Christians who welcomed us in worship and fellowship. And how very grateful I am for the telephone that keeps us in touch with family while we are away.

May your Thanksgiving be filled with true meaning this year!

* * * * * *

This item came to my desk too late to give adequate space in this issue. The Central Church of Christ in Irving, Texas, is planning a new musical adventure for singers among the Churches of Christ: THE FIRST ANNUAL CHORAL FESTIVAL. This one-day festival planned for June 6, 1987, is not a competition but an event to encourage the use of acapella music to glorify God and inspire his people. Dr. Jack Boyd of ACU will direct the 150-member chorus.

If you are interested, please contact Reid Lancaster immediately, for the deadline for registration is December 1. He can be addressed at 1710 West Airport Freeway, Irving, TX 75062 or phoned at (214) 259-2631.

—the Editor

"TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING . . . TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION . . . TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD."
— EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT, JULY, 1967

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THE FACE OF MINISTRY

Burn-Out And The Fire That Consumes

RON DURHAM

The problem of burn-out in the helping professions has received a great deal of well-deserved attention in recent years. As far as professional church ministry is concerned, the causes are often identified as too much work for too little pay, identity crises, perfectionist demands (on the part of both the church and ministers themselves), and living in the fishbowl (or, as one minister described it, the "piranha bowl") of church leadership where being "real" is not allowed.

I have been haunted by the feeling that many of these factors, real as they are, may sometimes be symptoms of a deeper etiology of burn-out. Is it possible that a more explicitly theological factor is involved? By "theological" I do not refer to doctrinal issues, but to divinity itself. I am asking here if the fires of ministerial burn-out may be attributed to God, or to the nature of his Word.

I

Both Scripture and experience bear witness to the fact that to minister between the Holy One of Israel and the church is to expose oneself to the Fire that consumes. When John of the Apocalypse stood before him whose eyes were like blazing fire, he fell down as though dead (Rev. 1:17). This awesome scene seems strangely out of place in a day when "having a personal relationship with Jesus" is spoken of so glibly. The fact is that an experience of the Holy is "something that captivates and transports . . . with a strange ravishment" (Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 31).

This is the electro-magnet burning of a Power that will not release us until it wills, and with which we cannot reconnect until it wills again. It is symbolized by the sun in ancient Egyptian religion, and by the eternal flame in the modern Parsi temple. It is the Power whose place is guarded by nothing more appropriate than the seraphim, the mysterious burning ones in the prophetic visions of Jewish and Christian Scripture.

Yet, this is the very fire which, in biblical religion, God's ministers are supposed to grasp with naked, uninsulated hands. They are asked to be carriers of the purifying flame, the Word of God. A charlatan or an Elmer Gantry may not be dismayed by this task; but the conscientious and sensitive minister may think twice before attempting it. Yet when such a Jeremiah hesitates to deliver the message, the Word is "as a fire, burning within my bones" (Jer. 20:9). And even if the minister consents to deliver the divine firebrand, the question of Proverbs 6:27 remains: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" We may well ask also whether, in the absence of some spiritual asbestos suit, the soul is

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not burned as well.

And so some burn out.

I am aware that all such intense feelings may be stated in modern psychological terms. The burning may be dismissed as a subjective urgency, a mere neurosis. Persons may "feel" a sense of mission so strongly that they overextend themselves and collapse from misguided fatigue. If they would only think more positively about their mission and cheer up, they would not face the internal fires of self-questioning, or of sympathetic pain. I could as well dismiss Jeremiah and Isaiah, Jesus and Paul as paranoid prophets for whom the best fate would be to be stoned, and as mercifully as possible, as A.N. Whitehead wryly advised. However we describe the experience of a special calling, biblical faith insists that some people are objectively impelled to minister; and in the ministering there is a burning.

Author and minister Walter Wangerin has a pastor say to himself, while confronting a counseling client

Both Scripture and experience bear witness to the fact that to minister between the Holy One of Israel and the church is to expose oneself to the Fire that Consumes.

with a hard saying, "I want to cry for both of us: I do not know if I am touching you with healing, nor how it burns" (*Christianity Today*, Dec. 17, 1982, p. 27). But *that* it burns, ministers know very well. They have felt the searing flame of the same cutting torch with which they sculpt the souls of others.

Thus there is often an integrity factor in burn-out. The Word ministered in counseling or from the pulpit or on the printed page has the power to burn through the conscience of the one dispensing it. The minister who administers words of healing for wounded marriages may eventually find herself burned out because her own marraige is in shambles. The fiery reformer who confronts the church with the prophetic word may fall to the flame when he realizes that he himself, and all church systems, are flawed.

And so some burn through.

To change the figure, ministry in the name of the God of the seraphim involves "passing around one's perforated heart for others to see and handle" (G. Curtis Jones, *The Naked Shepherd*, p. 122). Many ministers' hearts are far too touchy even in their relatively safe caves of flesh and bone, and most certainly when exposed to the fiery glare of openness to others.

The burning power of the Word may also help explain an ironic phenomenon of some cases of burn-out in the ministry. Some intense people-helpers have come to resent—even despise—the very people in need of help. There are many spiritual wounds that resist cauterizing. It is only natural that the cauterizer become frustrated. If those to whom we have been sent are weak at best and obtuse at worst, we may shake the dust from our sandals and dismiss ourselves from the responsibility of ministering to them.

And those who stand so close to the Fire must also endure the dazzling, dizzying Light. Those who dare take fire from the Holy can be consumed by overexposure to ecstasy as easily as to agony. They can be so awed by infinity that they despair of their own finitude. One minister who had considered suicide explained, "It was not trouble that slew me, but happiness—the excitement of the most exhilarating opportunity I had ever had" (*The Naked Shepherd*, p. 85).

"Ministers who are really dedicated," we sometimes hear, "don't burn out." Such superficial discounting ignores the fact that the burning can increase with the intensity of personal dedication. We forget that the terms "dedicated" and "devoted" have the same two-edged cutting power as the term "ravished." Scripture uses these words as freely for the doomed as for the called, for those consigned to die as for those appointed to live concertedly for God. "No one devoted (Heb. *cherem*), who is to be utterly destroyed from among men, shall be ransomed; he shall be put to death" (Lev. 27:29).

All this is to say that it is no light thing to accept a calling from God, "for our God is a consuming fire." People do not burn out who never dare to respond to the Burning.

II

I cannot believe that God requires all ministers who risk the Burning to be burned *out*. But before moving to more positive reflections, it is important to note some inadequate ways of avoiding the fire.

Those who dare take fire from the Holy can be consumed by overexposure to ecstasy as easily as to agony.

One common but futile defense is to withdraw behind the asbestos shield of perfunctory performance. Some ministers protect themselves from the intensity of the fire by slipping behind a shield of religious duties lightly performed, as an X-ray technician slips the leaden barrier before switching on the healing-burning-exposing ray. Of course professional

ministers must sometimes serve whether they feel like it or not. But longterm, spiritless performance of spiritual chores is usually fatal both to the minister and the ministered to. Many goods can be produced without the producer being totally committed to them. But the good which a minister would do must come with a personal recommendation and consumer report. We lose trust in ministers who consider the goods too hot to handle.

Others try, under the pressure of identity-fatigue, to shed their identity for awhile. A banker who closes his window at 2 or 3 p.m. to go fishing can become a fisherman for a time. A surgeon can finish her day with a literal "closure." But ministers must wear their identify to the bank and to the beach, at the hospital and at home. To relieve this pressure all sorts of ruses are tried. Some ministers learn unholy language to take a rest, as it were, from the burden of the Holy. Perhaps if their speech is out-of-character, the Hound of Heaven can be thrown off scent. If a crucifix repels a demon, perhaps the magic can be reversed: an oath spat out may quench the Fire for a blessed moment. I am sure that ministers need the freedom to say what they are feeling as much as anyone. But the artificially secular attempt to say "Shibboleth" is often like Mark Twain said of his wife when she attempted to take up swearing: she had the words down, but could not quite get the tune.

And there is the well-known attempt to deny the reality of the Fire by pretending it does not burn. Ministerial workaholics may pride themselves in their capacity to work sixty and seventy hours a week, plus remaining on call at night and on weekends, without needing a break. Actually, it requires as much self-discipline for dedicated ministers to require themselves to take vacations (and to recreate when they vacate) as it does to remain steadily stoking the fires of ministry. Holidays and study leaves will not quench the burning, but they may provide baskets in which to carry the Fire.

III

There are more theological defenses; and if it is true that some burn-out is to be traced to God, then these measures will also prove to be more fruitful. Usually these defenses are to be found by reflecting on the Minister *par excellence*, Jesus of Nazareth. Somehow, he personalized the Holy without being consumed. In some way, "in him dwells the fulness of the godhead bodily"; yet the Burning does not burn through.

It is common to focus at this point on the human nature of Jesus, noting that since he became tired and occasionally withdrew from constant ministry we can, too. Ironically, however, modern ministers may have more to learn from the dissimilarities between themselves and Christ than from the similarities. For example, in the well-known "kenosis" passage, Philippians 2:5ff., the apostle Paul claims that Jesus was holy by nature. Applying this statement to our figure of fire, we may say that for Christ to grasp the divine Fire to his bosom would be something like tossing a torch into a bonfire. The natures are the same. Because he was holy as well as human, Christ has no need to purify himself in the fires of the Word before ministering it to others simply because he *is* the Word.

Unfortunately, the holy calling of less holy ministers sometimes misleads them to make a similar identification, with all the dismal consequences which accompany misguided pride. The human minister seizes the Word with defiled hands. It is a mistake to forget that the calling in itself does not cleanse them. As in some Medieval theology, a minister can wrongly assume that some holy substance adheres to the person, that some sacred stuff sticks to those who accept a sacred task. It can be forgotten that just as the call is by faith, the holiness is also. Even the sanctity of the task is to be recognized only because it is a task like that of Christ.

However we describe the experience of a special calling, biblical faith insists that some people are objectively impelled to minister; and in the ministering there is a burning.

From this rather negative line of thought emerge two positive defenses against some forms of burnout. The first is simply (?) confession and repentance. It must be confessed that neither the counseling office nor an elevated pulpit makes us worthy by nature to handle the holy. Before Isaiah could minister the burning Word, coals from the divine Fire had to purge his lips of guilt (Isa. 6:7). Imaging this before the mirror each morning may be a healthy corrective to ministerial pride of office.

False altruism must also be confessed. That is, the minister must admit that a personal need is met in ministering. The denial of self-interest in ministry has led to the shattering of more than one minister's perfectionist self-image; and sometimes it is fragmented beyond repair. How releasing it can be to don the identity of a minister with a sense of personal choice because of a legitimate need, instead of laboring under the delusion that one is serving only out of

(continued on p. 19)

Watching The Service Or Experiencing Koinonia?

Church as Non-Institution

By STEVEN L. McKENZIE

Several months ago my daughter and I were walking to church. She was concerned that she had forgotten to bring a coloring book or something else to occupy her. She said, "I guess I'll just have to watch the service." I consider her statement a remarkably eloquent expression of the way most modern Christians view the church. Church-goers do resemble theater-goers. They sit hearing a monologue and watching the performance of solemn rituals.

I am convinced that much of this spectator mentality is attributable to a misunderstanding of the purpose for the Christian assembly. Children are told "we go to church to worship God." The signs on church buildings advertise the hours that "worship" begins. The "services" are carried out in a formal, solemn atmosphere held to be conducive to a certain notion of worship. However, Christian worship is characterized by the New Testament as the devotion of one's life to God. It is not ritual sacrifice, but the sacrifice of oneself (Rom. 12:1). Hence, it cannot be restricted to any one time or place but is a matter of sincerity of heart and spirit (John 4:23). The real reasons for coming together as Christians are clear from Hebrews 10:24-25. Beginning in 9:1, the Hebrews writer describes Jesus' death in terms of Old Testament cultic practice as a self-sacrifice to atone for sin. He goes on to say that since Jesus offered himself once for all time and for all people, there is no longer any need to keep rituals such as sacrifices. He exhorts his readers to draw near to God, having been purified in the sacrificial blood of Christ (10:19-22). He then encourages them in 10:24-25 to meet together in order to "stir up one another to love and good works" and to "encourage one another." Church assemblies ought to be occasions when Christians are strengthened through fellowship and mutual edification to lead worshipful lives.

Even in proof-texts for so-called "acts of worship" the elements of fellowship and encouragement are evident, though they have been neglected. Ephesians 5:19 speaks of "addressing *one another*" and Colossians 3:16 of "teach(ing) and admonish(ing) *one another*" in singing. In 1 Corinthians 10:16 the elements of the Lord's Supper are said to be a participation (*koinonia*, "fellowship") in the blood and body of Christ. The next verse describes how the Lord's Supper represents the unity of Christians as the body of Christ. Thus, "discerning the body" while eating the Lord's Supper in 11:29 probably means being cognizant of the fellow Christians with whom one communes in partaking.

Christian worship is characterized by the New Testament as the devotion of one's life to God. It is not ritual sacrifice, but the sacrifice of oneself.

In 2 Corinthians 8-9 Paul urges the Corinthians to give for the famine-stricken Judean Christians. He holds up the example of the Macedonians who begged for the privilege (*charis*, "gift, grace") of sharing (*koinonia*) in helping the needy (8:4). The example and motivation for giving is Jesus Christ who was rich but became poor to enrich others (8:9). So the Corinthians who now prosper should give to help

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those who are wanting (8:14). This type of giving and receiving is *koinonia*, i.e., the act of mutual sharing by the Christian community. Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 14:26 regarding the importance of interpreting tongues (including prayers in a tongue) is paradigmatic. "Let all things be done for edification."

The social situation of most modern American churches stands in strong contrast to the picture in the New Testament of the earliest churches. Apparently, most of those early churches met in the houses of their members. They owned no property. The relatively small size of those ancient churches afforded them a greater opportunity to develop intimate personal relationships through their fellowship in their common experiences. Contemporary churches, however, often seem to stifle fellowship. Most attempts to get to know one's brothers and sisters are forced to occur "after hours" as an "extra curricular activity" and frequently outside the walls of the "sanctuaries" designed exclusively for "worship." If fellowship and edification are the primary purposes for meeting together as a church, contemporary Christians have largely missed the point.

The misunderstanding of the purpose for Christian assembly is actually symptomatic of a much greater problem in modern Christendom: the tendency to view the Church as an institution. By this I mean that the Church is seen as an entity of intrinsic value apart from the people who make it up. Churches are frequently patterned after corporations and are run like businesses. Church leaders often seem to have abandoned the vocation of personal shepherds (cf. 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Instead they operate as a governing board preoccupied with matters of fiscal administration, such as the purpose and maintenance of physical facilities and the hiring of various clerical and clergical personnel. A good example of this kind of institutionalization is the church contribution. The proof text for it is 1 Corinthians 16:1-2: "lay by in store on the first day of the week." Churches retain the practice but have overlooked the reason for it. The collection discussed in 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8-9 was to meet an immediate human need, not to support an institution. In fact, Paul's reminder in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 indicates strongly that the Corinthians did not normally take up a collection.

The programs of large churches often do much good, and close personal relationships do develop in such settings. However, it is generally true that the more numerous and affluent a church becomes the more impersonal it grows. It is easier to be ignored and to ignore others in a crowd of a thousand than in a group of twenty. I am not advocating a return to house churches in an effort to "restore the New Testament church." Nor am I arguing that we try to reverse the social process of crystalizing from a "sect" into a "church." But there is a good deal more to church growth than attendance figures and dollar amounts.

There is a significant theological principle at stake here. It may be called the "horizontal dimension" of Christianity. It is best articulated in Ephesians 2:14-16, which describes the cross of Christ as tearing down barriers between God and persons and between Jews and Gentiles. Thus, Christ came not only to reconcile people to God but also to create harmony between persons. The implications of this principle for the Church are far-reaching. Christians cannot be content with communities fractured along racial or social lines and with limited fellowship within their churches so long as "I'm all right with God." Jesus died to bring people into community with each other as well as to make them "all right with God." If the horizontal dimension precludes racism in the Church, how can it allow sexism? It must be taken seriously as an argument against the relegation of women to a secondary function in the Church. It calls upon Christians to become more involved in each others' lives and more sensitive to each others' needs. It places upon the Church a responsibility for reaching out to those who are not Christians, not only to bring such people into fellowship with God but also with the "social gospel" that brings God's compassion to suffering humanity after the fashion of Jesus.

Christian assemblies ought to be occasions when Christians are strengthened through fellowship and mutual edification to lead worshipful lives.

I recall hearing as a child that the Church was the people who came to the building, not the building itself. I still believe that to be true ideally. If we have strayed from that ideal and its implications, it is because we have allowed our ecclesiology to be determined by pragmatism and social convention rather than theology. MISSION

A 20th ANNIVERSARY REFLECTION

Now, More Than Ever, We Need *Mission*!

RICHARD T. HUGHES

As *Mission Journal* observes its twentieth year of publication, a relatively low number of subscribers (c. 1,500) has prompted some to ask if *Mission* is really needed any more. They suspect that *Mission* is really a relic of the sixties and has little or nothing to say to the "me generation" of today.

These critics are right in viewing *Mission* as a child of the sixties. But precisely for that reason—among others—*Mission* is today more indispensable than ever before.

I have just gone through fourteen of the most recent issues of *Mission*, and what I found there was reassuring. Of some 78 articles, well over a third—and the largest category by far—explored the truths of the biblical text. Some of these articles were deliberate Bible studies, others were sermons, and still others were theological reflections on the biblical message.

Some twenty additional articles addressed matters of ethics and social justice. Here sensitive and thoughtful writers spoke of world hunger, the role of science in the modern world, the Christian response to nuclear weapons, racism in America, and other vital themes of moral concern.

Richard Hughes, of Abilene, Texas, is a former editor of Mission Journal. He is currently writing a history of the Churches of Christ to be published by the Greenwood Press and co-authoring with Leonard Allen a book of essays on liberty and restoration.

As I reread these tracts, I thought again of *Mission's* purpose statement which committed the journal in 1967 to exploring the Scriptures, to understanding the world, and to bridging the two. And it struck me that when 63 percent of the articles in *Mission* over a fourteen-month period deal directly with biblical theology and ethics, *Mission* is fulfilling her purpose very well.

But why do I specifically link *Mission* with the 1960s? I do so not only because 1967 was the year of its birth, but also because *Mission's* historic task reflects the ethos of that dynamic period. The sixties produced its share of false prophets, to be sure; but it also produced its prophets. It was a time when matters of ethics and social justice—war, racism, and ecology—were paramount in the minds of Americans. And it provided a splendid opportunity for Christians to connect those issues to the truths of God's word.

Some Christians chose to ignore the issues of that time and to legitimate and sanctify the status quo. *Mission*, however, did not. It chose, instead, to provide a forum where these issues could be addressed from various perspectives on the message of Scripture.

This suggests another way in which *Mission* reflected and continues to reflect the ethos of that decade. There were shrill and dogmatic voices in the sixties, and there were voices on both right and left

that sought to stifle all opposition. But through it all there emerged a spirit of dialogue and inquiry that pervaded the period. Anyone who taught in American colleges and universities in that period remembers well that students refused to take pat answers lying down. Everything was questioned. Nothing was sacrosanct. Dialogue, debate, and inquiry reigned supreme.

In that milieu, *Mission* emerged as an open forum—a religious periodical serving the restoration heritage where questions could be asked and answers could be given and dialogue and debate could ensue. This purpose continues to define *Mission's* task. As Board President Bob Randolph suggested in the 1985 Reader's Forum.

> Mission has made a habit, sometimes to our detriment, of asking the unpopular questions. However, I believe that that's what a journal like *Mission* must do if it's to remain true to its call—not to be afraid to ask the unpopular questions—the difficult questions—not to ask them simply for the purpose of hearing ourselves shout, but to ask them for the purpose of beginning conversation, keeping conversation going, keeping conversation alive, believing always that ideas and opinions are important and occasionally they need, Lord help us, to be changed.

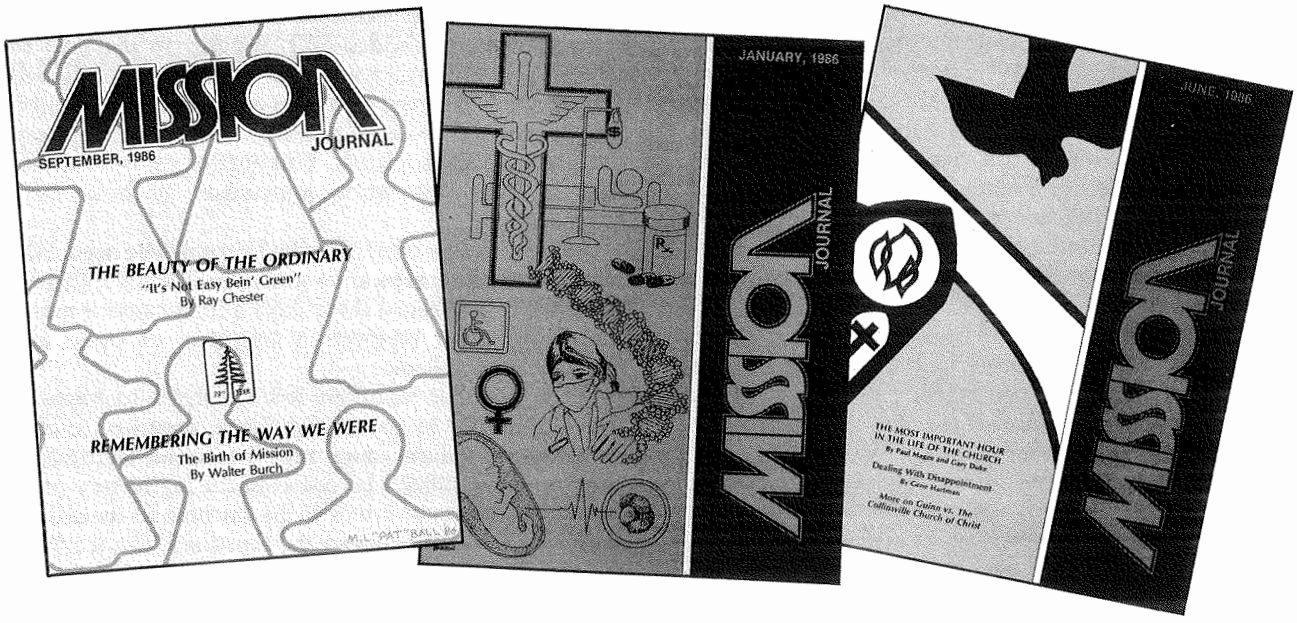
All of this is why I link *Mission* with the 1960s. But why do I say that *Mission* is today more indispensable than ever before? I say this, first, because I believe the values of the 1960s—inquiry, debate, and social concern—are enduring and legitimate values. But, second, I say this because our own time has moved perhaps 180 degrees from the values of that period.

No one today will admit to being unconcerned with ethics and social justice. Yet, everyone knows that ethical concerns are not high priority items in the minds of most middle and upper-middle class Americans. Typically the dominant concerns instead are for hard work, personal gain, and feeling good about one's self.

Indeed, these values have invaded the churches to a very large extent. Instead of sermons on cross-bearing, we routinely hear discourses on self-esteem. Instead of being inspired with the need to care for the poor, we often hear lessons in "Bible classes" on financial planning for retirement. Instead of hearing the gospel message which calls for a radical abandonment of self, we hear much these days on ministering to one's self: how to conquer anxiety, how to improve one's marriage, or how to cope with depression. Unfortunately, there are even "churches" which specialize in the gospel of health and wealth. Issues of social justice, for the most part, have simply fallen on hard times.

Yet, what child of God, serious about the Christian faith, can forget those ringing denunciations from the prophets' mouths regarding those who oppress the needy and exploit the poor? Or who can forget the teachings of Jesus himself concerning a cup of cold water in his name?

We need *Mission* today more than ever before simply because voices raising these great biblical



themes are few and far between. The fact that few may think these themes relevant or marketable is beside the point. They are relevant because they are biblical, not because they either speak or fail to speak to "contemporary needs."

But we need *Mission* also because it continues to be one of the few forums in our fellowship where dialogue, debate, and exploration of important issues from a variety of perspectives either occur or can occur.

Ours is an age when the voice of authority typically precludes the rational discussion of issues. Most people simply don't want the burden of thinking through issues, weighing evidence, and coming to an informed decision on issues that really matter. They would much rather simply hear the answers from somewhere "on high."

This itself is a kind of legacy of the sixties—but in the form of back-lash. Many who lived through that

tumultuous period found the incessant questions unbearable and yearned for the security of fixed and final answers. They grew weary of hearing critics tell what was wrong with the world, America, or the church. Bumper stickers appeared with the slogan, "America: Love It or Leave It!" And many Christians adopted the same attitude regarding the church.

In the years that have followed, criticism—even realistic criticism—has become passé and is often viewed as impolite and even cynical. What reigns instead are good feelings, positive attitudes, and smiles. No one would quarrel with the fact that this positive perspective is both virtuous and productive. But it is one-sided and often obscures the reality of sin and suffering in the world. And in the process, the decade of the sixties has been discredited, more often than not, as negative, cynical, destructive, and subversive.

To a very large degree, *Mission* has been a victim of this shift in mood. Many of the older generation who have not seen *Mission* in many years continue to write it off as hypercritical of the church, of America, and of every thing they hold dear. What they don't know is that *Mission*—while retaining its cutting edge and its diversity of perspective—routinely uplifts, edifies, and encourages in article after article, issue after issue. And they don't know that *Mission's* pages continue to be open to all sides of issues. One thinks, for example, of the articles which called to task the judgment of the Collinsville elders, followed by lengthy articles by Flavil Yeakley in which he sought to set the record straight. Here is open journalism in the best tradition of our heritage.

But *Mission's* greatest challenge in the 1980s comes not from those of the older generation who have consciously rejected *Mission* with its dialogue, discussion, and open-ended inquiry. It comes rather from many in the younger generation who are fundamentally disinterested in the perspective *Mission* represents. In fact, there are communications specialists who argue that the day is past when magazines and journals that specialize in dialogue and critical reflection can succeed.

Perhaps this is true. If so, it likely is very much related to the demise of liberal studies—history, philosophy, theology, literature, etc.—in American colleges and universities across the board. Students today are far more apt to concern themselves with facts, statistics, and technical skills for success in the market place than they are with questions of social justice, causality, and the meanings of events. It is no wonder that a publication like *Mission* experiences hard sledding in times like these.

All of this is a commentary, however, not just on the fate of *Mission*, but also on the fate of the whole heritage of restoration journalism. While few today might believe it, it is nonetheless true that journalism throughout most of our history thrived on open inquiry and dialogue. Throughout the entire nineteenth century most periodicals in our fellowship published articles that reflected the concensus and articles that ran counter to the consensus. Open journalism was the norm, not the exception.

One memorable example comes to mind. In 1889 David Lipscomb added F.D. Srygley to the staff of the *Gospel Advocate* when Lipscomb knew full well that Srygley differed with him on three critical issues: the Christian's role in politics, instrumental music, and missionary societies. This sort of editorial diversity typified restoration journalism in those early days.

So why do we need *Mission Journal*? We need *Mission* because it keeps alive some great biblical themes that are rarely heard these days and because it maintains the great restoration tradition of open and dialogic journalism.

True it is that relatively few subscribe to *Mission*. But popularity in the market place, contrary to conventional wisdom, does not determine legitimacy. *Mission's* legitimacy is rooted in the legitimacy of its task. And if it continues to be faithful to its task of bridging the gap between the word and the world in an atmosphere of open discussion, its legitimacy will persist for many years to come. MISSION

BOOKS

Bruce Edwards, Book Review Editor

Readers are invited to submit reviews to Dr. Edwards, 1040 Village Drive, Bowling Green, OH 27514

The Ragman And Other Cries of Faith

By Walter Wangerin, Harper and Row, 1985

Walter Wangerin is a well-known speaker and minister and the author of one of the more celebrated children's fantasies of the last decade, THE BOOK OF THE DUN COW, a retelling of Chaucer's Chaunticleer tale told through a Christian perspective. In this new book, THE RAGMAN AND OTHER CRIES OF FAITH, Wangerin employs the same engaging style and wit to bring to life characters and caricatures which exemplify the discipleship to which Christians are called. Some of the stories are imaginative fiction while others are meditations on Wangerin's experiences as a pastor, a husband and a father. We are confronted with a series of unforgettable images, personalities and personifications of biblical truth.

Wangerin's M.A. in English serves him well in this book of tales, parables, anecdotes and refurbished sermons from his pastorate at Grace Lutheran Church in Evansville, Indiana. Not every one of the twenty-six "stories" is on target—sometimes Wangerin indulges his penchant for "poetic prose" too much, leaving the reader adrift on a sea of mixed metaphors—but his aim is true often enough to enthrall any Christian reader, particularly the teacher looking for a fresh image of Jesus to present to an audience of jaded believers. Wangerin is at his best in the title tale, "Ragman," a parable about the exchange of garments which occurs at conversion.

The subtext of the book, "and other cries of faith," is a crucial commentary on the working materials Wangerin uses to craft his collection. These are stories of human lives, of grit, of determination, of righteousness and self-righteousness, of peace, joy and love: the realities, frustrations and exhilarations in serving Christ. While not yet as accomplished a stylist as Frederick Buechner, Walter Wangerin certainly deserves to be mentioned in the same breath. We owe him a great deal for his honest and compelling inquiry into such cries of faith.

The Letters Of Francis Schaeffer

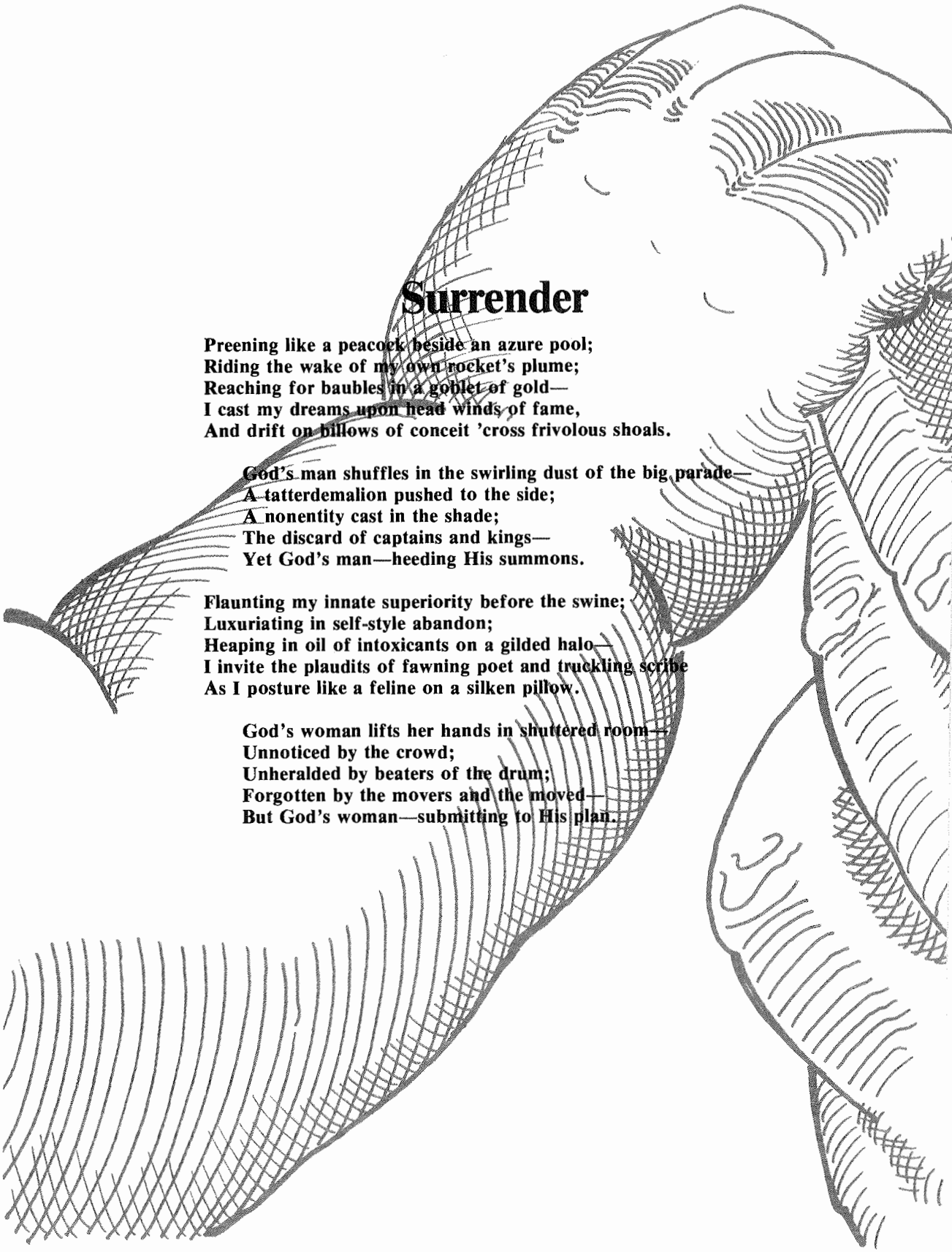
Edited by Lane Dennis, Crossway Books, 1985

Francis Schaeffer became a prolific and well-known Christian apologist in the late 1960s after the publicized spiritual success of his family's "L'Abri" (shelter) for wounded and skeptical believers in Switzerland. Since his death, Schaeffer has been both canonized and vilified as a "Christian intellectual." The impact of Schaeffer's work on the church is just now, however, being assessed, and this work, a collection of some 1300 letters by Schaeffer will assist in that process.

I admit to having been one of Schaeffer's early readers who first was captivated by and then disheartened with his output; after the rigor and promise of his first few books, Schaeffer seemed to merely repeat himself without new insight. This book restores my early enthusiasm for Schaeffer and renews my confidence that for the Schaeffer family their foremost goal is and was always to win and secure people to Christ and not to a philosophical position.

Those who hoped, however, that this volume would contain revealing, behind-the-scenes correspondence between Schaeffer and other Christian writers and thinkers will be disappointed. This collection deals specifically with letters about "spiritual reality in the personal Christian life." The editor, Lane Dennis, scrupulously

(continued on p. 22)



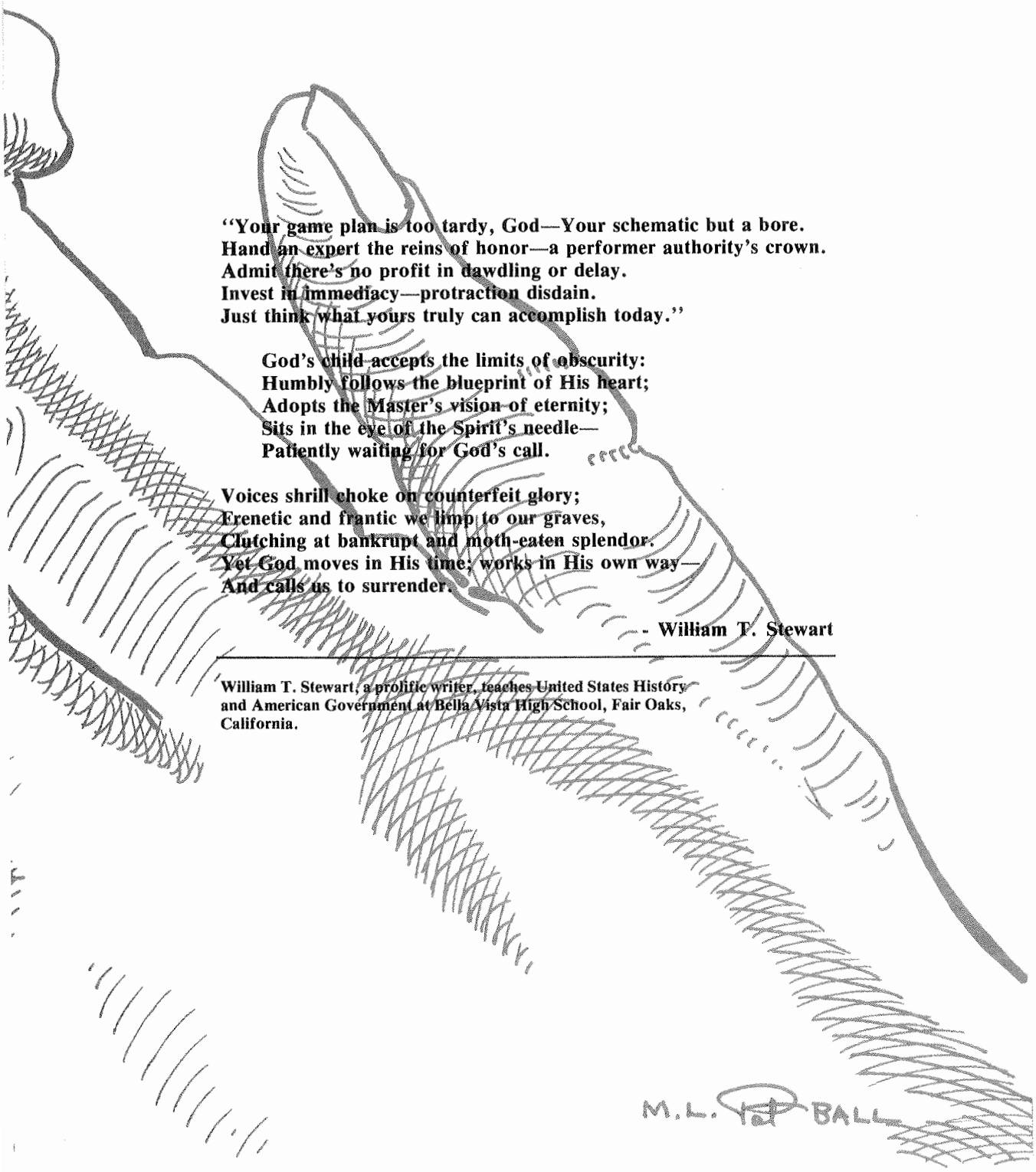
Surrender

Preening like a peacock beside an azure pool;
Riding the wake of my own rocket's plume;
Reaching for baubles in a goblet of gold—
I cast my dreams upon head winds of fame,
And drift on billows of conceit 'cross frivolous shoals.

God's man shuffles in the swirling dust of the big parade—
A tatterdemalion pushed to the side;
A nonentity cast in the shade;
The discard of captains and kings—
Yet God's man—heeding His summons.

Flaunting my innate superiority before the swine;
Luxuriating in self-style abandon;
Heaping in oil of intoxicants on a gilded halo—
I invite the plaudits of fawning poet and truckling scribe
As I posture like a feline on a silken pillow.

God's woman lifts her hands in shuttered room—
Unnoticed by the crowd;
Unheralded by beaters of the drum;
Forgotten by the movers and the moved—
But God's woman—submitting to His plan.



"Your game plan is too tardy, God—Your schematic but a bore.
Hand an expert the reins of honor—a performer authority's crown.
Admit there's no profit in dawdling or delay.
Invest in immediacy—protraction disdain.
Just think what yours truly can accomplish today."

God's child accepts the limits of obscurity:
Humbly follows the blueprint of His heart;
Adopts the Master's vision of eternity;
Sits in the eye of the Spirit's needle—
Patiently waiting for God's call.

Voices shrill choke on counterfeit glory;
Frenetic and frantic we limp to our graves,
Clutching at bankrupt and moth-eaten splendor.
Yet God moves in His time; works in His own way—
And calls us to surrender.

- William T. Stewart

William T. Stewart, a prolific writer, teaches United States History and American Government at Bella Vista High School, Fair Oaks, California.

A Word For Our Times

a column for opinion and personal reflection

Floods: Who Is Responsible For Our Misfortunes?

By Bob Johnson

I write this while Northern California recovers from the "floods of 1986." The rains came, and came. Rivers overflowed, and residents in low-lying areas retreated as water destroyed their homes and possessions.

When tragedy strikes, people often look for something to be thankful about. If nothing else can be found, we can always be glad simply that things weren't worse. We can even shape our praise for God in those terms. At church one morning after the floods, someone thanked God that the rains stopped before more damage occurred.

I am little comforted, however, when someone finds evidence of divine mercy in the fact that things could have been worse. Of course they could have. But they could have been better too. If God prevented something worse from befalling us, I wonder why he didn't prevent the misfortune altogether? Thanking God that things weren't worse disturbs me because it makes God responsible in some manner for everything that did occur.

The implication that God is responsible for either our tragedies or their magnitude, or both, hinders me when I try to affirm my belief in his mercy. Making God responsible can create doubt in even the strongest believer, which I am not; the idea certainly supplies fuel for the skeptic.

The problem of doubt is reduced, however, if we avoid making God responsible for our tragedies. Instead, we can acknowledge that our misfortunes, most of them at least, are the result of our own choices, choices that placed us in situations where tragedy can and did occur.

Suppose I step off a mountain while attached to a hang glider. Should I blame God if I lose control and crash? Should I praise him if I break only one leg instead of two? No, I think not. I acknowledge that I risked my safety in hang gliding and absolve God of responsibility for my injuries.

When I operate or ride in an automobile, I am aware that thousands of my fellows die in automobiles each year, and many more thousands are seriously injured. Driving is risky. Should I blame God if *I* become one of those statistics? Not if I want to be fair to God. *I* chose to be in an automobile; God didn't put me there.

Let's apply this idea to the floods. Suppose land developers build houses in flood-plains. Suppose families purchase those houses and rely on flood control plans that confine in narrow channels rivers that have always spread for miles during winter rains.

Shall we blame God when raging waters breech levees and reclaim lowlands on which we live? Or should we acknowledge that we chose to rely on plans and technology that were unable to contain earth's natural forces? Unless we perceive Christianity as a kind of flood insurance in which God promises to abolish storms so that we can live on flood-plains, we must accept responsibility for getting flooded.

People who live along California's rivers choose to risk losing everything in a flood. Similarly, anyone who lives near a faultline can die in an earthquake. Coloradans know that they can be marooned in blizzards, and Georgians risk dying in killer winds. We all subject ourselves to risks of one kind or another simply by choosing where to live.

But, while simple choices can produce some of our misfortunes, a more profound kind of choice is responsible in a more basic way. That more profound choice is the commitment we make to the belief that we can and ought to control nature rather than merely adapt to it. For example, instead of adapting to the rivers by building our homes on high ground, we are committed to building dams for controling the rivers and for exploiting them for energy and recreation. With a dam in place, we can build our homes in the flood-plains and sail our boats on the reservoir.

Unfortunately, in our attempt to control our rivers rather than adapting to them, we not only subject ourselves to the risk that nature will overflow our dams, we actually create conditions for disasters that could not have occurred before. Floods that once were normal events become catastrophes when our dams can't contain the runoff.

Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen) captured the distinction between adapting to nature and trying to control it in these two excerpts from *Out of Africa:*

> The Natives have, far less than the white people, the sense of risks in life. Sometimes on a Safari, or on the farm, in a moment of extreme tension, I have met the eyes of my Native companions, and have felt that we were at a great distance from one another, and that they were wondering at my apprehension of our risk. It made me reflect that perhaps they were, in life itself, within their own element, such as we can never be, like fishes in deep water which for the life of them cannot understand our fear of drowning. (First Vintage Books Edition, December 1985, page 20)

Speakers Of A Word For November: *Bob Johnson* is a part-time instructor in Rhetoric at the University of California, Davis. *George L. Brown* of Lewiston, New York, is interim minister for the Hickory College Church of Christ. *Jan Randolph* is a recent graduate of Harvard University and is a member of the steering committee for the Brookline Church of Christ. *John Wright* is minister for the Burke Road Church of Christ in Pasadena, Texas.

> The Kikuyu are adjusted for the unforeseen and accustomed to the unexpected. Here they differ from the white men, of whom the majority strive to insure themselves against the unknown and the assaults of fate. The Negro is on friendly terms with destiny, having been in her hands all his time; she is to him, in a way, his home, the familiar darkness of the hut, deep mould for his roots. He faces any change in life with great calm. (*Ibid.*, page 24)

We Americans are not likely, of course, to stop building dams; and we are surely not about to abandon our faith in the ability of science to control nature. At the same time, however, we ought not to blame God when our technology is unable to contain earth's natural forces.

To propose that our misfortunes result from our choices is not, of course, to propose that we are always aware of the risks in those choices. Not even geologists may know that the home we occupy lies atop a fault deep in the earth's crust or that the subdivision where we live occupies a river channel long ago forgotten.

Moreover, to suggest that we are responsible for some of our misfortunes is not to excuse us from helping each other when tragedy occurs. Love does not seek excuses for not helping. A cup of water for the thirsty receives divine approval even if the thirsty ought to have carried a water bottle.

While this view does not involve God in the responsibility for our misfortunes, it does leave him where we most need him: inside us, upholding, sustaining, strengthening. Our misfortunes, whatever their cause, remind us that we need his strength to overcome our pain.

Our misfortunes also remind us that we need each other. God commands us to help our fellows who suffer great losses and to remember that we all need each other from time to time. None of us can escape risks, and most of us will suffer some tragedy or another. God's children are a family, and we must all help and be helped sooner or later.

Finally, this view keeps in focus the notion that, while earth may usually be a pleasant place, it is not heaven; and we have no scriptural grounds for supposing that it should be. We sojourn in a land that contains many sorrows. Lest we become too comfortable here, the risks of earth-living remind us God has something better prepared for us.

Idol Worship: The Tragedy of Separation

George L. Brown

This past weekend the latest edition of a "spiritual weaponry" book crossed my desk. You know the kind: cover-to-cover logic. The kind of writing that turns on every pulpit lawyer. Articles that rank with the best the scribes and Pharisees could produce in Jesus' day.

My heart was saddened. My stomach felt nauseated. My mind burned with anger—kind of like the time Jesus was in the synagogue on the Sabbath and burned with anger at the Pharisees for their attitude toward healing (Mark 3).

And I remembered two years ago. The fifteen-year-old son of a friend had died of a gun-shot wound. The large Catholic Church was filled as a memorial mass was said. Through their tears the boy's teenage friends spoke warmly of their memories. We all shared our heart-rending grief. We all reached out silently and softly to the agonizing family, with our hugs, our tears, our awkward words, our searching prayers, our love.

As I sat through the mass, I participated as best I could for one not familiar with the liturgy. In this moment of deep grief we united in deep belief. And I asked, "What separates me from them?"

A student gave the reading of the Gospel. *Did this separate us?*

The mass focused on eternal life. *Did this separate us?*

The pastor spoke boldly and humbly on "Why?" *Did this separate us?*

The assembly turned to each other for the bestowing of peace. *Did this separate us?*

We expressed our love for the bereaved. *Did this separate us?*

We confessed our trust in God's forgiveness. *Did this separate us?*

We shared our conviction in the hope for tomorrow. *Did this separate us?*

We heard the call to the disciples. *Did this separate us?*

My heart answered: What separates us is the rituals we observe when we assemble. It's our idiom, our "church vocabulary," our style—most of which is cultural tradition. Even the phrases we use to describe our church activities give us away. We have "church services" or "worship services" that suggest something special happens at the magic hour, and then we complain because believers don't worship with their lives.

The ultimate tragedy is that we fail to see the message for the words, to paraphrase an old cliche. Where, my friendly scribes, does Jesus or Paul, Luke or Peter, James or John ever mention (explicitly or implicitly or aplicitly) a worship service? It is not the Holy Spirit who has led us to the conclusion that we "go to church" or "go to worship." The clear picture painted by Jesus and his disciples is that we worship our Father by the way we live. Calling what we do in our assemblies "acts of worship" and setting them up as sacrosanct is nothing short of idolatry.

This idolatry is so pervasive across the community of believers that it appears that the one body—the church of Jesus Christ—is hopelessly splintered. Why? Because we gauge our view of unity by the rituals we practice.

What if we saw the community of believers from the perspective of how we live? Is love the primary factor in our daily walk with God and other persons? Are we compassionate, merciful, and just? Do we heal, teach, counsel, and restore? Are we trusting and praying? Suddenly a new view comes into focus. Can it be? Yes, there *is* one body and one Spirit, one hope; there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all (Eph. 4).

The New Testament picture of believers-in-assembly is what we call today a support group. Paul clearly says it is for strengthening the church (1 Cor. 14); the Hebrew writer says it is

to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10). The teaching is radiant: bring your worship to church and share it! God is doing great things in your life! Jesus died for your sins! Be filled with the Spirit! Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5).

Jesus worshiped the Father every day he lived. He prayed constantly. He practiced what the prophets preached. He was the Good News in action. When He went to synagogue, He *continued* his worship by more teaching, healing, forgiving, loving. He was the best role-model we have.

I find it hard to believe He called us to debate as if we were lawyers and as if the Bible is a book of case-law and statute combined. That kind of Christianity doesn't match the message. No, Jesus called me to worship our Father by how I care for my wife and children, how I work with my colleagues and clients, how I respond to my community's needs, how I think, how I listen, how I speak. In short, Jesus called me to worship God by letting his love be active every day. And praise the Lord, He forgives me when I mess up miserably! Because He loves me!

If there is any man-made argument or instrument that interferes with my praising God, then it is my idol and should be smashed at the foot of the cross.

And I remembered, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble . . . or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8).

What Is Helping?

By Jan Randolph

Helping is enabling someone to do something that she/he cannot do by her/himself. Helping comes from a true caring for others. Helping involves the capacity of being there for someone, the ability to listen to that person, and the gift of patience.

When asked to define helping, my first reaction is to respond with what I have experienced as not being helpful. An individual is not being served when dependence upon the helper is encouraged. One is not aided when the helper makes quick judgments about what the person is saying, puts her/his thoughts into the mouths of another, or has her/his own idea of what the person seeking assistance should do. A helper does not impose her/his views on another. Moreover, a helper is a person who seeks to continue to learn more about her/himself through interaction with others. *A helper is not a savior.*

In order to be a helper, one has to be clear about the ability and ways to be of assistance and have the capacity to let others move at their own pace. Being helpful involves creating an atmosphere of trust, a safe place to learn. In allowing this place to be safe for another, one must be in touch with her/his own needs, parameters, and vulnerabilities.

Three years ago I went down the Grand Canyon with a group who take people down the Colorado River in wooden dories. Part of many days was spent climbing up side canyons in order to see such things as beautiful waterfalls, rock formations, and Indian ruins. Before each climb, a boatman would explain what was to be seen on the climb and what was involved in order to do the climb. Then one was to make one's own decision as to whether or not to go. Often, several people stayed at the riverside with the boats to write, read or sleep. Several went on the hike. Many of the hikes were strenuous. However, it was not demanded that hikers move faster than their ability or desire or climb higher than their wishes or comfort. The boatmen who went along with us made it known that they were there to assist us if we needed assistance or wanted assistance. The philosophy was that a hand was there if one needed it; someone would always be at the places of particular difficulty. That hand or that offered knowledge was not there to create dependence or make one do something she/he did not want to do. They were there because some people might need that assistance in order to do what they wanted to do: that hand or information enabled these people to do something they would have been unable to do by themselves.

One of the experiences of the trip that has stayed with me illustrates my view of helping. At a particular point, when I successfully completed a tricky, difficult maneuver, the trip leader whispered in my ear, "Good job!" His hand had not been far from mine; it was reachable. Earlier in the trip on another climb, I had grabbed it gratefully. This time I was thankful for my own accomplishment; I was also comforted by the knowledge that he was aware of my struggles, was there if I needed his help, but was willing to let me make that decision.

Has The Essence Been Retrieved?

By John Wright

> *"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good . . . especially to those who belong to the family of believers."* Galatians 6:18

The church was designed to be a "community" of people who love and help each other along the pilgrimage toward God. It's not that we are trying to climb up to where Christ is, but as pilgrims we follow in his steps until he returns to take us home. A variety of terms have been used to describe the church—"household of God," "family," "body of Christ," "kingdom" and "children." But always the idea of "community" is found in the term: people, together, working for the glory of God.

Unfortunately, often the church has assumed more the form of an "institution" or "organization" than a community. John Stott was right when he stated, "The essential difference bet-

ween a 'community' and an 'institution' is that in the former members retain their freedom to choose, while in the latter it is to some degree taken away from them." For example, there is quite a difference between a typical neighborhood and a maximum-security prison. One is a community. The other is an institution.

As one reads the New Testament's record of the early days of the church, it becomes quite clear that the members of the church are personally involved in its activities, decisions and problem-solving processes (cf. Acts 7, 15; 1 Tim. 3, etc.). The church was not a tightly run institution controlled by dictatorial rule. Yet, often the twentieth century church has become precisely that. Instead of shepherds who lead by the example of sacrificial service, one finds a board of elders delivering pompous edicts about everything from theology to cosmetology, fully expecting the institution's patrons to jump with prompt response.

If the essence of the church is to be "community," then it doesn't matter how many points of "identifying marks" we are able to show on the veneer of our reproductions. As long as that which we have remains an "institution," we have not yet come close to bringing about the restoration of the New Testament church.

Restoration is an on-going process. One of the great needs today is that of restoring once again the essence of "community" within our fellowships so that we, indeed, may be the body of Christ.

Constitutional Issues In The Appeal Of The Collinsville Church Of Christ

Part 3: Freedom Of Speech and Other Issues

By FLAVIL R. YEAKLEY, JR.

In two previous issues of *Mission*, Part 1 of this article presented the facts in the case of *Guinn vs. the Collinsville Church of Christ;* and Part 2 presented the religious freedom issues raised by the church in its appeal. This three-part series is here concluded with a discussion of other constitutional issues raised in the appeal and comments on the implications of this case.

The Freedom of Speech Clause

The First Amendment protects religion through the establishment clause, the free exercise clause, and the general requirement of church-state separation. Religious speech, however, is also protected in the First Amendment by the more general statement that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech."

The recent case of *Widmar vs. Vincent*[1] clearly demonstrates the view of the Supreme Court in regard to the protection of religious speech. This case concerned a student religious group at the University of Missouri at Kansas City. This state university denied a student religious group the use of its buildings for their meetings, although nonreligious student groups were allowed to use the buildings for their meetings. The student religious group argued that its right to free speech and association prohibited the University from denying them the use of the buildings. The University also based its case on the First Amendment. They claimed that because of the separation of church and state, they could not allow religious groups to use the buildings at a state university. The Supreme Court, however, argued with the student religious group thus showing that freedom of speech and association outweigh the admittedly important principle of separation of church and state. The Court said, "Here, UMKC has discriminated against student groups and speakers based on their desire to use a generally open forum to engage in religious worship and discussion. These are forms of speech and association protected by the First Amendment."[2] The Court went on to explain specifically that reading Scripture and teaching biblical principles are protected as religious speech.[3]

In sharp contrast to this ruling, the judgment of the trial court against the Collinsville Church of Christ and its elders was based on objections to certain forms of religious speech. When the elders went to

A graduate of the University of Illinois with a Ph.D. in Speech Communication, Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr. taught First Amendment studies at the University of Tulsa for ten years.

talk to Marian on three occasions about her fornication, that was an exercise of their religious freedom and of their freedom of speech. The trial court's judgment, however, classified this as "invasion of privacy by intrusion upon seclusion." When the elders told Marian that the fellowship of the church would be withdrawn from her if she refused to repent, that was an exercise of their religious freedom and their freedom of speech. But the trial court punished that exercise, classifying it as "intentional infliction of emotional distress." The message the elders read to the congregation explaining why they must have no further association with Marian Guinn was religious speech in the form of a sermon with Scripture reading and biblical teaching. As such, it was not actionable in civil courts. The speech occurred in church. All of the speech involved internal religious discipline. But the trial court's judgment punished the church and its elders for this exercise of religious freedom and freedom of speech, classifying it as "invasion of privacy by publication of private facts."

In the case of *Heffron vs. International Society for Krishna Consciousness,*[4] the Court found that the distribution of religious views to and the solicitation of money from nonbelievers at a public fair constituted religious speech. If religious speech is protected in that circumstance, how can it be punished in the case of the Collinsville Church of Christ? The conduct for which the Collinsville Church of Christ and its elders have been punished was simply an exercise of their freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Their speech—religious speech—is protected. The District Court's judgment infringes on that freedom and chills the type of speech at issue here. Because of that infringment on the protected religious speech, the judgment is clearly unconstitutional and must be reversed.

The Freedom of Association Clause

The First and Fourteenth Amendments protect the freedom to associate for religious purposes. In *NAACP vs. Alabama,*[5] the Supreme Court recognized the constitutional right to associate for the advancement of beliefs. In the *Widmar vs. Vincent* case discussed earlier, the Supreme Court clearly stated that gathering to engage in religious worship and discussion are forms of association protected by the First Amendment clause guaranteeing the right of the people "peaceably to assemble . . . ."

In the Collinsville case, the members of a congregation came together as a religious assembly to withdraw the fellowship of the church from a member who refused to repent of her fornication. Although this action took place at the time of a regular Sunday morning worship assembly, this specific action is generally viewed by Churches of Christ as being an assembly separate from the worship assembly. Churches of Christ generally regard the teaching of 1 Corinthians 5:4 as suggesting an assembly called for the purpose of withdrawing fellowship from a rebellious member, rather than being a regular worship assembly function.

The effect of the District Court's decision in this matter, however, is to impose a chilling effect that would discourage other congregations from having similar assemblies called for the purpose of withdrawing fellowship from a rebellious member. To deny the right of a congregation to have such an assembly is to deny their constitutional rights—both in regard to their religious freedoms and in regard to the freedom of assembly.

The association or gathering of a congregation is necessary to advance and effect its beliefs concerning church discipline. A withdrawal of fellowship is not possible if the congregation is not notified of the decision so that they can act accordingly. The elders of the Collinsville Church of Christ believe that the statement of Matthew 18:17, "tell it to the church," requires an explanation of the reasons when a congregation is instructed to withdraw its fellowship from a rebellious member. For a civil court to punish a congregation for having such an assembly is to deny their constitutional rights in regard to the religion clauses, the freedom of speech clause, and the freedom of assembly clause of the First Amendment.

When the elders told Marian that the fellowship of the church would be withdrawn from her if she refused to repent, that was an exercise of their religious freedom and their freedom of speech. But the trial court punished that exercise, classifying it as "intentional infliction of emotional distress."

Implications

Because of the unchecked review by a civil court of the mode and manner of religious discipline in the case of *Guinn vs. the Collinsville Church of Christ,* the floodgates appear to be open as wide as the courthouse doors. Unless this judgment is reversed, the potential exists for review by civil courts of Roman Catholic excommunication for the multitude of grounds contained in canon law. The potential also exists for civil courts to review theological disputes that arise in seminaries, divinity schools, univer-

sities, and colleges. Church-related schools are allowed, under current federal law, to discriminate in the hiring and retention of faculty in a manner that insures conformity with the church's doctrines and its moral code. That kind of action could now be subject to review by civil courts if this decision is not reversed. The potential also exists, if this decision is not reversed, for civil courts to review the meaning and application of biblical commands. The religious problems which would be capable of civil judicial review are endless. The judgment opens a boundless Pandora's box.

Furthermore, the effect of this judgment tends to inhibit several forms of religious communication. It tends to put the church into a passive role in regard to counseling wayward members since active pastoral counseling in this case was judged to be "invasion of privacy by intrusion upon seclusion." This judgment inhibits any practice of church discipline—whether in the churches practicing a withdrawal of fellowship, as in this case, or in churches practicing shunning as the Mennonites do or excommunicating as the Roman Catholics do. Clearly, the judgment inhibits the kind of religious communication that threatens any withdrawal of fellowship or that announces such action, since in this case that was judged to be "intentional infliction of emotional distress" and "invasion of privacy by publication of private facts." Indeed, if this judgment is not reversed, the precedent could be used to sue religious teachers who warn sinners that they will go to hell if they do not repent. Religious teachers could be called into civil court to defend their theology—as was the case in the Collinsville trial and as a result of Marian Guinn's objections to the strict moral code and the discipline taught by the Collinsville Church of Christ.

This case involves more than one small conservative religious group upholding an unpopular religious doctrine and practice. Public opinion was clearly on the side of Marian Guinn in this case. The idea of active pastoral counseling that seeks out wayward members to admonish them is not popular with most non-Christians and even with some Christians. Most denominations in America no longer follow the practice of withdrawing fellowship from members who sin and refuse to repent, although this practice was a part of the heritage of virtually all denominations. But as Chaffee points out in his monumental work on freedom of speech, it is only the unpopular views that need protection since no effort is made to restrict the expression of popular views.[6]

The primary implication of this case for Christians, however, goes beyond constitutional issues. What is at stake here, from a Christian perspective, is the right of a religious community to insist that its members live disciplined lives. If the church is denied this right, it cannot long endure as the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

NOTES

[1]454 U.S. 263, 269, 102 S.Ct. 269, 70 L.Ed.2d 440 (1981)
[2]454 U.S. at 269
[3]454 U.S. at 269 n.6
[4]452 U.S. 640, 101 S.Ct. 2559, 69 L.Ed.2d 298 (1981)
[5]357 U.S. 419, 78 S.Ct. 1163, L.Ed.2d 1488 (1958)
[6]Zechariah Chaffee, Jr., *Free Speech in the United States* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 4. MISSION

(**BURNOUT**, continued from p. 5)
great sacrifice.

The second defense is like unto the first, but opposite. The minister must affirm that it is acceptable to be a mere human in service to the holy. While our hands are defiled, there are not other sorts of hands. The tongues of fire at Pentecost deigned to dwell atop the very heads of those who had earlier denied their Lord. As Professor Ray Petry of Duke used to tell his students, "Ailing physicians are we all. But *we will do*, for God has chosen us to do so" (Wayne Oates, *The Presence of God in Pastoral Counseling*, p. 126).

Because the Burning is not controllable by persons, I assume that it is possible for its sovereign power to relieve a minister of his or her ministry. The intensity with which one minister prayed, "Do not cast me from your presence/Or take your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11) indicates to me that God *could* find a minister's services no longer required. The only way I know for one to tell if this is the case is to sharpen her powers of introspection, to share the issues in the more objective forum of caring members of the Body, and to wrestle with God in prayer.

But it is far more likely that burn-out inheres in the mistaken ways we handle the Fire. For despite its holy heat, it is more of the nature of the divine flame to heal than to consume those who truly long to serve before it. As Tillich put it, the divine fire is more likely to produce life than ashes.

Only we must confess that this life is human while the calling is divine. Unconfessed, uncleansed humanity, daring to serve before the Consuming Fire, can only be burned out. MISSION

MISSION and the Church

"That They All Might Be One"
Struggles of a Bilingual Church

ROBERT M. RANDOLPH, EDITOR

By BILLIE SILVEY

Last Sunday morning, Hubert Derrick, former professor of Spanish at Pepperdine University and former minister for the Vermont Avenue Church of Christ in Los Angeles, returned to the Vermont pulpit. The event was typical of fourth-Sunday activities at Vermont, yet it was very special.

Victor King, a young black family man, and Valentin Ramirez, a distinguished-looking middle-aged Mexican, led singing—two verses in English and two in Spanish of songs with the same tune. English words were in the song books, and Spanish words were printed in an insert in the church bulletin.

Don Owens, a retired accountant, and Miguel Perez, who works for the Department of Water and Power, read the Beatitudes and led the congregation in prayer.

Two black men and two hispanics served the Lord's Supper; and then Michio Nagai, Japanese-American minister for the English congregation at Vermont, introduced the speaker, who preached in Spanish and summarized his sermon in English.

At the conclusion of the service, Derrick related a comment made some years ago by Vermont elder and then dean of Pepperdine E.V. Pullias. Dr. Pullias was looking forward to a time when there would be no color and we'd all speak one language. "Vermont Avenue this morning is about the closest I've seen," Derrick explained.

The worship service brought together the new and the old Vermont Avenue.

Vermont used to be the campus church for Pepperdine University. It began meeting on land adjacent to the campus in 1937, the year the college was founded. From their beginning, Pepperdine and the Vermont church were open to all races, but very few blacks attended when Derrick preached there from 1949 through 1956.

I came to Los Angeles in 1965, during the curfew which followed the Watts Riots. Since that time, I have seen four waves of change in the ethnic makeup of the Church. I have been a part of the transition and have been both thrilled and disappointed by its results.

The first wave of change came with the efforts of Jennings Davis and others through their project known as Operation Brotherhood. Davis was dean of Students at Pepperdine and a deacon at Vermont Avenue; in June of 1968, the year Martin Luther King was assassinated, he invited John Allen Chalk and Zebedee Bishop to speak in chapel and at the Normandie church on racial understanding.

Other meetings were held that year at Torrance and at the Vermont Building. "Operation Brotherhood got the church talking about issues in a mixed audience setting," Davis explained. "We had been visiting back and forth, but not on the issue. We were talking as individuals, but not getting churches together until then."

Several outreach activities were begun, including Kairos House in Watts, Camp Victory, and the Lighthouse program sponsored by Vermont.

I served as a counselor one year for Camp Victory, a church camp for racially-mixed youth from black, white and hispanic neighborhoods. It was fun to watch the girls style each other's hair and giggle in the tent till all hours.

Lighthouse was a Saturday morning program of tutoring Bible classes and of sports for neighborhood children in the area around the campus, which by

A member of the Vermont Avenue Church of Christ in Los Angeles, Billie Silvey is associate editor of 20th Century Christian magazine. She has taught women's and children's classes at Vermont Avenue and frequently speaks for women's groups and teachers' workshops.

this time was predominantly black. I taught the older girls and tutored several children on an individual basis.

The events of the '60s may not have represented a distinct change in ethnic makeup, but they did increase awareness of ethnic needs, divisions, and tensions. Blacks came to Vermont in increasing numbers in response to the interest projected.

The second wave of change came in 1972, when Pepperdine opened its new campus at Malibu. Several white families, including a few elders, left Vermont when they were transferred to the new campus. For the next ten years, Vermont had an almost fifty-fifty black-white ratio. We also had a group worshiping in Spanish and a small group of Chinese-speaking students meeting in our building.

The third wave hit with the closing of the Los Angeles campus in 1982. It dealt a death-blow to efforts at racial balance at Vermont. Since that time, the English-speaking congregation has been predominantly black.

The final wave may still be cresting. As hispanics move into Los Angeles in increasing numbers, we have seen our Spanish congregation grow to nearly equal the English-speaking group—particularly among refugees from El Salvador.

About four years ago, we began the practice of meeting together in a bilingual service on the fourth Sunday of every month, giving the two language groups a chance to get better acquainted and to pick up a little of each other's language. What a thrill to see young blacks and hispanics serving communion together at a time when black and hispanic gang members were killing each other on the streets.

This year, the minister from the Spanish congregation was installed as an elder, drawing the ties between the two language groups even closer.

Vermont is not typical of churches in the Los Angeles area. Most Los Angeles churches are homogeneous—monoracial, monocultural, and monolinguistic. "We aren't doing as well in Southern California as a lot of those in the Deep South are doing," said Grady Bryant, who moved to Los Angeles in 1920 as a child. Bryant and his family worshiped with the first black church in the city, which met in the home of H.A. Arnold, a former slave.

"I don't think the churches have changed as much as we would like them to," Dr. Pullias said. "Everything else has changed faster than the churches have."

Ernest Shaw, a school administrator whose family integrated Pepperdine's married students housing in the early '50s, said, "It seems to me we've fallen back into the same old patterns."

And Pepperdine's former president Howard White

Life together at the Vermont Avenue Church of Christ in Los Angeles, California: below, translating at a ladies seminar; upper right, teenagers laugh and learn together; lower right, Vacation Bible School.

summed it up, "My impression is that the two races have gone their separate ways as much as ever."

Black and white churches in Los Angeles have separate preachers' meetings, lectureships, speakers, publications, and worship and organizational styles. Several congregations in each group help sponsor works among the Spanish-speaking population.

Part of the problem is geography. You can drive for miles in Los Angeles and still be in a neighborhood that is predominantly of one ethnic group.

Part of the problem is the human tendency to relate most comfortably with those with whom we have the most in common.

Part of the problem stems from our Southern roots.

Part of the problem is a lack of trust. We are afraid we might lose our power base if we have to share with each other in important ways.

And part of the problem is prejudice and fear. We want to feel superior. We are afraid we might find ourselves inferior.

The truth is that we are all both superior and inferior in different ways. Each ethnic group has distinctive strengths that it can contribute to each of the others. We each have weaknesses that could be offset by another's strengths.

We are depriving ourselves by our separation. We are depriving the church of needed strength in an urban setting where it is greatly outnumbered at best. And we are depriving God of the glory that comes when we fulfill Jesus' desire "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

MISSION

(BOOKS, continued from p. 11)

adhered to Schaeffer's wishes that he put together a collection of letters that dealt with three specific topics: (1) The reawakening of spiritual reality; (2) spiritual reality in daily living; and (3) spiritual reality in marriage, family, and sexual relations. None of Schaeffer's correspondents are indentified and some letters are edited or rewritten to prevent the reader from even guessing their identity.

The reader of this work will discover the "pastoral Schaeffer," catching a flavor, perhaps, of what a visit to L'Abri might have been like. Throughout these letters, Schaeffer is unfailingly concerned about individuals and their needs; it is refreshing to discover that, despite the sometimes stuffy and off-putting "philosopher's cloak" that Schaeffer threw over his other prose, his letters reveal an unpretentious, self-effacing warmth and concern for real Christians struggling with their very real problems. In his prose, Schaeffer was no C.S. Lewis and usually is not as compelling a stylist as his wife, Edith; but in these devotional letters he reveals a heart fully given to serving God and to that extent this is a book worthy to be read by both the admirer and the disparager of Schaeffer.

J.R.R. Tolkien: Myth, Morality, and Religion

By Richard Putrill, Harper and Row, 1985

Richard Putrill, a professor of philosophy at Western Washington University, has written several books about that Oxoxian clan known as the Inklings, which included the likes of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams. He interpreted Lewis and Tolkien's fantasies in a previous volume, and most recently published an analysis of Lewis's apolgetics. Each of these volumes had the virtue of taking the technical or obscure and making them accessible and meaningful to the non-specialist. In this new work, J.R.R. TOLKIEN: MYTH, MORALITY, AND RELIGION, Putrill continues that plan of attack in this engaging study of Tolkien's religious faith as it is made manifest in his works of fantasy and myth.

Tolkien, a Roman Catholic, never made the Christian faith as explicit in his fiction as his friend C.S. Lewis. Nevertheless, Putrill argues forcefully, the essence of faith is present in each Tolkien tale—from the LORD OF THE RINGS to his lesser known shorter tales. This is a way of saying that Tolkien does not "preach" to his readers; he was interested in telling a good story, not with contriving a particular moralism. However, this desire to produce an enduring and enriching body of tales came from the heart and mind of a deeply religious man whose characters and situation cannot help but evince the Christian character of their creator.

Lewis once said that Tolkien had been "inside language," that is, that as a philologist, Tolkien was so engrossed in the study (and creation) of languages that he knew more about how language shaped our lives than almost anyone else. Putrill's book helps document that idea with two superb chapters on myth and mythology and how Tolkien used his own mastery of myth to craft middle-earth. This book is not just for lovers of Tolkien, nor only (or especially) for a literary scholar; rather, it serves any reader wishing to know what factors help account for the faith and expression of that faith in the work of a believer. To my mind, Putrill's study is the best introduction to Tolkien's work now in print.

Enclosed is my check to cover a one-year subscription to *Mission Journal* . . . . I want to be sure to receive the July, 1986 issue as I understand there will be an article in it by Dr. David Elkins about the book *Voices of Concern.*

For several years I took *Mission,* but let my subscription lapse several months ago due to a decline in interest . . . .

For the most part I enjoyed *Mission.* It is a refreshing and stimulating publication. I appreciate the different points of view which are discussed. I often passed on my copies to friends. Some, with less education and Bible background than others, had some difficulty in understanding some of the articles. There are some very scholarly and intellectual articles. I have no quarrel with this as I am sure many of your readers who are well educated enjoy such writings. It does not hurt any of us to have to study and research in order to understand some of the things which are said in the articles.

However, at times I found some of the articles very difficult to appreciate and somewhat irrelevant to the average person's life. On the other hand, there have been many, many articles which were of great help and encouragement to me. I realize you can not please everyone.

Dusky Henry
Estes Park, Colorado

Editor's Note: In this time of Mission's *soul-searching and reevaluation of our tasks and goals, the critique of our readers is very important. Will you write to let us know how you feel about what we are doing and to offer suggestions for improvement.*

Enclosed is my check for a renewal of my subscription. Ray Chester's article on "It's Not Easy Bein' Green" in the September issue is easily worth the price of a year's subscription. Hats off to him for an excellent piece of journalism.

Alvin C. Rose
Ashland City, Tennessee

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